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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a counseling model for managers in education who must deal with staff, their problems, and their perceptions. The basic principle underlying the model is given: the helper is not expected to have ready-made solutions to others' problems, but to offer motivation, time, and skills to help others solve their own problems. The three stages through which the problem mangement helping model works are listed and explained; they are: (1) initial problem clarification; (2) setting goals; and (3) designing and implementing action programs to achieve the goals. For each stage, the roles of the helper and the problem owner are described. An outline summarizing the work at each stage is provided which extends the helper's necessary behavior in each stage within the context of a work-centered problem situation. The paper concludes with a list of advantages of the counseling mode of managerial behavior. It is noted that this counseling model places the responsibility for self-management and change with the individual, fulfills the responsibility the manager has for helping clients, helps to produce a caring, honest, and sharing environment which contributes to the overall climate of the institution, and establishes the professional peer relationship most suitable for educational institutions. (NRB)

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A COUNSELLING MODEL FOR MANAGERS IN FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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July, 1982

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A COUNSELLING MODEL FOR MANAGERS IN FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Managing people involves talking and listening to them:

- Establishing and maintaining a social relationship
- Solving day-to-day problems of the organisation and its work
- Briefing, giving orders, consulting
- Advising
- Appraising, evaluating, and developing
- Disciplining
- Confronting

From time to time people come along simply because they have a problem which affects them and they want to talk about it (for its cathartic effect), they want advice, or they want help in solving it. As Miller, Galanter and Pribram (1960) say: "an ordinary person almost never approaches a problem systematically and exhaustively unless they have been educated to do so".

Occasionally the manager may need to explore with people a problem he owns because of their marginal performance (Curtis, 1982), identified perhaps as lack of organisationally helpful motivation (Marsh, 1982), passages through mid-life and mid-career crises (Marsh, 1982) or as part of the process of negotiating objectives (Turner, 1982). They are less comfortable in shifting from an advisory mode ("if I were you I would") to a counselling mode, since the latter involves understanding and "being with" the other person in his perceptions of what is happening to him.

This paper is intended to provide a simple model of counselling, based on Egan (1982), and Munro, Manthei and Small (1979) adapted to suit the needs of managers in education who have to deal with staff, their problems, and their perceptions. Most of the necessary skills have been dealt with elsewhere (Marsh, 1980A, Field 1981A & B) and the paper supplements those, together with those papers dealing with the rationale and processes of confrontation, negotiation, and inter-personal skills generally (Marsh, 1980B, Turner, 1978).

Counselling: The Problem Management Hleping Model

The basic principle underlying the model is that the helper does not, nor cannot, have ready-made solutions to problems others own (unless he is the cause of that problem). What the helper does have is the motivation, time, and skills to work with the other to help him (or her) solve/

solve his own problems. The owner of the problem is responsible for solving it; counselling is effective to the degree that it helps the other to manage his problems more effectively. The problem management helping model thus works through three stages:

* Identifying and clarifying the real problem
* Helping the other to set goals
* Designing and implementing programmes of action to achieve those goals

I Initial Problem Clarification

Since there must be interaction during counselling two sets of desirable behaviour must occur, that of the helper and that of the owner.

* The Helper

Attends physically and psychologically to the owner, listens actively to what the owner is saying, facilitates the owner's self-exploration through judicious probing, responds with respect and empathy to what is being said, and establishes a working relationship.

* The Owner

Because of the way in which the Helper responds, the Owner is encouraged and helped to explore the experiences, behaviours, and feelings that relate to the problem situation so that it begins to be clarified and defined.

II Setting Goals

* The Helper enables the owner to piece together meaningfully the data produced in Stage I, helps to develop the new perspectives needed for setting goals, and facilitates the goal setting process.

* The Owner begins to see the problem situation in new ways, understanding the need for action and chosen goals (i.e. behavioural ways of managing problem situations in new ways).

III Designing and Implementing Action Programmes

* The Helper collaborates with the owner in working out a specific action programme, explores the various ways of achieving the set goals, gives support and direction to those programmes, and helps the owner to evaluate them.

* The Owner explores the best ways for him to achieve goals, looks for the resources within himself and his environment, chooses programmes, carries them out, copes with problems, and evaluates the programme with the Helper.

In/

In many ways Stage I is the easiest part of the process for the Helper. Moving to Stage II and then to III is more difficult (sometimes the Owner withdraws since the pay-off for living with his problem is too "good" or "bad" to initiate change) but must be accomplished if the Owner is to cope more effectively with the problem situation. The whole may be achieved in one session, or it may take a protracted and significant period of time. If the problem is one of life in the widest sense, managers may wish to refer the Owner to professional helpers. Where is it a problem related to work, the organisation and its tasks, the manager has a responsibility to complete the process. If he does not, then he may begin to own the problem for himself because of the effect of the Owner's behaviour on the manager. (See Marsh, 1980)

The following outline extends the Helper's necessary behaviour in each stage within the context of a work-centred problem situation.

A Summary of the Work of Stage I

If the problem situation is complex, then help the owner choose some part of the problem that, if handled, will probably lead to some significant improvement in the quality of his or her work.

Help the owner explore the issues involved in terms of

* Relevant experiences, behaviours and feelings
* Relevant environmental influences
* Relevant principles of behaviour - such as reinforcement, avoidance

Help the owner explore the area as concretely as possible - that is, in terms specific to situations.

Help owners explore not just their deficits but also their resources.

Help owners explore the past only to the degree that it helps them get out from under self-defeating emotions and contributes to the goal of clarifying and defining the present problem situation.

Use the skills of attending and listening to gather data related to the problem area. Observe how the owner's here-and-now behaviour expresses his or her problems in working.

Use the skill of empathy to help owners gather and clarify data and to develop a working relationship with them.

Use probing techniques to stimulate the owner to recall and review data needed to make the problem area as clear as possible.

Encourage the owner to participate in and "own" the entire helping process.

Help owners acquire whatever working knowledge of the helping process and self-disclosure skills they need to participate in this problem-clarification stage.

Do/

Do not spend more time and energy than the problem is worth - that is, make sure there is a reasonable return for the energy expended.

A Summary of the Work of Stage II

Keep in mind the primary objective of Stage II: helping owners establish workable goals - that is, ways of managing the problem situation or some part of it.

If owners have blind spots that prevent them from seeing a problem situation clearly enough to set reasonable goals, then challenge them to develop the kinds of new perspectives they need to do so.

Use whatever mix of challenging skills seems appropriate to this owner in this situation - summarizing, helping the owner get new information, sharing hunches about the owner and his or her behaviour, sharing your own experience, confronting, and being immediate.

Challenge them to "own" problems - that is, to define them in terms of what they do or don't do instead of what others do or don't do.

Use the skill of immediacy to help owners "own" the helping process - that is, participate more fully in it.

Help owners shape workable goals - help them move from mere statements of intent to more concrete aims to specific problem-managing goals.

Make sure they see goals as statements of precisely what they are going to do to manage a problem situation or part of it more effectively.

Help owners set goals that are stated as accomplishments, clear and specific, measurable or verifiable, realistic, adequate, owned by them, in keeping with their values, and set in a realistic time frame.

A Summary of the Work of Stage III

Once owners set problem-managing goals (what they want to do), help them establish programmes that will enable them to achieve these goals (how they are to do what they want to do).

Use techniques such as brainstorming to help owners discover a number of different ways of achieving a goal. Help them engage in divergent thinking in order to take a census of programme possibilities.

Once a number of different ways of achieving a goal have been discovered, help owners use techniques to evaluate and choose a programme or a combination of elements from different programmes that best fits their resources, values, and preferences and the constraints of the environment.

Before they implement a programme, use techniques such as force-field analysis to help them identify the major obstacles they will encounter and the major resources that will be available.

As owners implement programmes, provide the kinds of support and challenge they need to give themselves as fully as possible to the work of constructive behavioural change. Use this same problem-solving process to help them cope with the kinds of problems that arise in trying to implement a programme.

Help them evaluate the quality of their participation in the programme, the degree to which the programme is helping them move toward their goal, and the degree to which the achievement of the goal is helping them manage the original problem situation.

Finally, help them make a decision to recycle any or all of the problem-management process, to focus on some other problem, or to terminate the helping relationship.

Conclusion

The counselling mode of managerial behaviour has a number of advantages:

- Responsibility for self-management, self-development, and the change of inappropriate behaviours is placed firmly where it should be, with the individual
- It fulfills the responsibility the manager has for helping people to cope more effectively with the interaction between themselves and the working environment.
- It helps to produce a caring, honest, and sharing environment which contributes in turn to the overall climate of the institution.
- It establishes a professional peer relationship which appears to be the most suitable organisational style for educational institutions.

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